

Opening remarks for the second Forum day

- It is my pleasure to open this second day of the EU Sport Forum and to wish you all a very warm welcome.
- This is the third time that the European Commission has organised this key annual event, which constitutes an important platform for our dialogue with sport stakeholders.
- Last year's Sport Forum took place at a time when an Icelandic volcano brought Europe's air transport to a standstill. Not all of you therefore had the possibility to get to Madrid. I am happy that we are more numerous today to jointly discuss some of the major developments regarding sport in the EU setting.
- A lot has happened indeed.
- Europe was hit by a severe financial and economic crisis that continues to have a direct impact on our policy-making, including budgetary implications both at EU and national levels. We have all been burnt by these developments, and the sport sector is not excluded. Our discussions over the coming days in Budapest also have to be seen in light of this general political and economic context and the EU's efforts to ensure recovery and long-term prosperity. For the EU the stakes are indeed especially high.
- Yet, there are also positive stories to be told – and the progress made over the past year in shaping the EU's approach to sport certainly is one of them.
- The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009 allowed the setting in place new structures for sport at Council level. EU Sport Ministers can now take formal decisions. The Treaty also gave the go-ahead for the European Commission to start preparing the implementation of the new EU mandate for sport included in Article 165 of the Treaty.
- The Treaty calls on the EU to develop and promote the European dimension in sport. Therefore, it has been our ambition from the start to derive the benefits from this new policy context for sport, in the interest of the sport movement and ultimately European citizens. From an EU perspective, we want to enable the sport sector to help meet the Union's social and economic goals relating to integration, education, public health, and of course growth and employment.
- In the first half of 2010, we had broad consultations with all relevant stakeholders to develop our ideas for a respective policy proposal. This formed the basis for our drafting of the Communication on Sport, which was then adopted by the

Commission college last month. Meanwhile, the Council is working on its response to the Communication.

- I should take this opportunity to personally thank all those of you who contributed to this process. Your input was hugely beneficial and helped us to set priorities for the themes and actions covered in the Communication. This afternoon, Commissioner Vassiliou, will present the key elements of the Communication and will discuss them with EU Sport Ministers and representatives from the sport movement.
- As much as you might see the EU making efforts to directly tackle the policy challenges in the field of sport, you might not sense the same momentum for the area of future EU financial support for sport.
- The Commission is well aware of the sport sector's expectations here. Again, it is important to get the overall picture to size the margins of maneuver for the EU, and the Commission in particular. Tomorrow, EU Sport Ministers will have a first informal exchange of views on the scope and limits for possible future incentives in the field of sport. And in a second, Gregory Paulger, Director for Sport and Youth in my DG, will explain to you the current situation in more detail.
- Turning now to our interesting programme today.
- This morning it is our intention to share with you the concrete outcomes from EU level activities in the field of sport. We will hear about the progress in implementing the 2007 White Paper on Sport; we will learn about the independent EU studies that the Commission has financed and for which results are now available; and we will get first-hand news from the Council and the European Parliament on the latest sport-related work in these institutions.
- At Midday, EU Sport Ministers will join us for a common lunch, which will be followed by an exchange of views on the Communication on Sport. I think I can promise you an interesting debate. We have excellent speakers and panel members, an experienced moderator and we have those who are the most involved with sport in the audience.
- Now, please feel strongly encouraged to actively participate in the discussions today.

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